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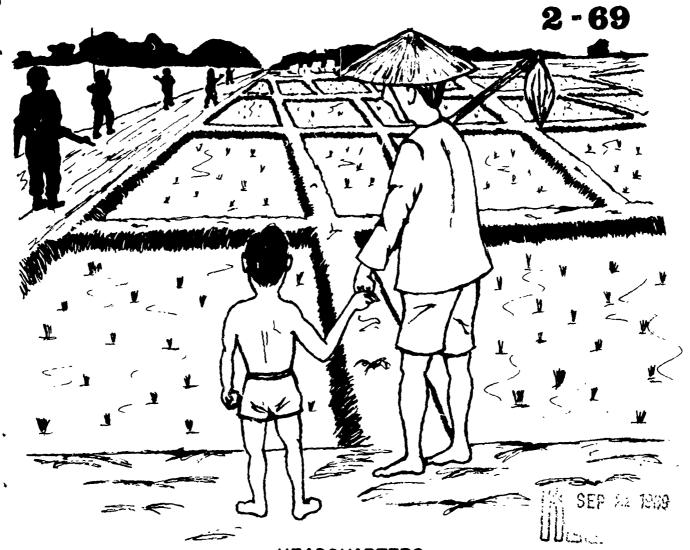
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COMBAT **EXPERIENCES**



HEADQUARTERS MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM APO SAN FRANCISCO 96222

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HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM APO 96222

MACJ3-053

29 July 1969

SUBJECT: MACV Combat Experiences 2-69

SEE DISTRIBUTION

- 1. This publication, which describes selected combat experiences on the subject of cover and deception (C&D), contains consolidated information reported by MACV subordinate units as required by MACV Directive 525-26. Articles on the subject of C&D will be published periodically with the intention of providing commanders and planners with a timely readout of the current C&D techniques being employed in Vietnam including known enemy C&D activities and related intelligence.
- 2. The validity and appropriateness of the material contained herein is dependent upon the inputs from subordinate tactical commands. Comment, suggestions and recommendations on this publication are encouraged and solicited.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

2 Incl

1. Combat Experiences 2-69

2. Distribution List

J.F HARRIS Major, USA Asst AG

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TACTICAL

COVER AND DECEPTION (C & D)

IN

COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS

TACTICAL COVER AND DECEPTION

SECTION I - GENERAL

1. (U) FOREWORD.

The tactics employed in the conduct of war must be adapted to meet the requirements of varying environments and circumstances. Each commander develops refinements to tactics, for use in his own area of responsibility, that may well have a practical and profitable application in other areas.

2. (C) CONSIDERATIONS OF ENEMY INTELLIGENCE.

- a. In spite of the fact that the enemy's intelligence system may be relatively unsophisticated, in a technical sense, it is highly efficient. All possible security measures must be taken to cover friendly operations from the enemy. He has developed an extensive collection system and has cataloged long lists of standard indicators with which to forecast friendly operations. The enemy is alert and quick to capitalize on all information relating to our tactical intentions.
- b. The same enemy intelligence capability against which we must guard makes tactical deception measures practicable, provided those measures are oriented upon and complement real courses of action. However, classic means of deception, typical of WWII, will not suffice. The enemy's use of patrols, infiltrators and civilians to gain intelligence make large scale simulation impractical. Likewise, the effectiveness of portraying units by simulative communications deception (SCD) is questionable. Because of the many means the enemy has to cross check through visual observations, the use of SCD is basically limited to "confirming" what has been presented to him through other deception means. Other electronic deception means also have little value since, within SVN the enemy does not possess nor utilize electronic systems, such as radar and navigation aids, which would serve as targets for the deception. In sum, in this environment it is difficult to deceive by simulation. To portray a unit essentially requires the employment of the unit itself or a unit of comparable size and makeup. This is usually a prohibitively costly procedure in terms of resources utilized.
- c. The positive approach is to deceive by variation of operating patterns. This is most effectively done at the tactical operating level where definitive action can be taken to avoid stereotyped patterns of operation. The tactical unit must vary the preparation and execution phases of operations so as to deceive the enemy. Preparatory adjuncts to ground operations, such as ARC LIGHT, artillery, leaflet drops, covert activities, reconnaissance and tactical air activity can be varied in time and location or some elements of preparation can be emitted entirely.

SECTION II - FRIENDLY OPERATIONS

1. (C) MEASURES.

In our operations it is essential that we achieve tactical surprise. Our enemy in South Vietnam is elusive and his doctrine calls for avoiding contact except when it is to his advantage. It is therefore imperative that certain measures be taken:

- a. <u>Security</u>. Strict security must be maintained during the planning phase of any operation. Premature disclosure of operational plans will alert the enemy.
- b. <u>Force Movement</u>. The movement of forces should be accomplished at the latest possible moment.
- c. <u>Tactical Ruses¹ and Feints²</u>. Attempts should be made to confuse the enemy as to the time and location of an attack. Deceptive measures should be employed in the manifestation of type and numbers of troops to be employed.
- c. Raids. Surprise may also be achieved by the employment of hard hitting units which are small in number and capable of being reinforced on short notice. This practice avoids the generation of intelligence indicators in the preparation of movement of larger forces.
- 2. (C) EXAMPLES. The following examples summarize representative actions in which tactics of a C&D nature have been employed to enhance security, entice VC/NVA forces into a major objective area or to prevent them from departing the objective area before friendly forces are in position to attack. Some examples are of major efforts, some are small scale elementary techniques. All efforts are aimed at enhancing the success of the mission.

^{1.} Ruses - Tricks to achieve deception.

^{2.} Feints - A limited objective attack to mislead the enemy and draw his attention away from the main attack.

- a. In a recent campaign against a VC stronghold which was begun by a B-52 strike, a ranger battalion operated for two days in a direction away from the intended target area. An ARVN battalion operating in conjunction with the rangers also operated in a direction away from the area. Both battalions made extensive use of artillery support. The purposes of these initial movements were threefold: To deceive the enemy as to the true objective thus preventing enemy camp evacuation prior to the attacks, to get units into position to be airlifted into the true AO and to establish a plausible reason for prepositioning of artillery. Subsequent to this operation, POW reports indicated that the B-52 strike preceding the ground attack was a complete surprise and that the enemy had no indication that the actual target would be their base area. The feint was successful in keeping the enemy in place in the true objective area.
- b. A particularly successful deception operation on record occurred when a US Division drew a VC regiment into an elaborate trap by controlled leakage of information which gave a false picture to the enemy. Contacts had been made during the previous month with elements of a VC Division. Decisive engagements had been fought on two separate occasions. Intelligence indicated that a VC regiment was still operating in the area in spite of the heavy losses it had sustained. The commanding general directed that a plan be developed to lure the VC into attacking US forces. Consequently, information on "scheduled" US resupply plans was intentionally leaked. The leaked "plan" indicated that the division would move engineer equipment and supply vehicles between two large towns on a specific day. This convoy was to be escorted with only a minimum security escort force. Assuming that the VC would gain the information and react to it, the division estimated a potential VC reaction. Five possible ambush sites were selected for the attack. (The site determined to be the most probable proved to be that at which the actual VC attack took place). The final concept decided upon was to send a reconnaissance in force between the two towns. Infantry battalions were positioned as Rapid Reaction Forces at nearby locations. Supporting artillery units were positioned on the predicted ambush site. Close air support flights were to be kept on station during the movement of the armored force. At 0900 on the day of the operation the force departed one of the towns and started movement toward the other town. At 1100 hours, the column was heavily engaged by elements of the VC regiment firing from well fortified ambush positions along the road. The combined effects of the .50 cal and 90mm fire from the tanks and personnel carriers, concentrated artillery fire, and the pounding from tactical air overwhelmed the VC regiment. By 1300 hours, the regiment broke and ran in disorganized retreat. By this time, infantry units had been airlifted behind the regiment and had begun to engage

retreating VC elements. Air and artillery continued to pound withdrawal routes. The next day separated elements of the VC regiment continued to be engaged by the divisions infantry battalions. By dusk on the following day, all elements of the VC regiment had withdrawn from the battle area. The regiment had suffered severe losses during the engagement and was estimated to have been reduced to less than 50% strength. The operation achieved the intended results. The success of US forces during the battle can be attributed to several significant facts:

- (1) Intelligence revealed that the VC were operating in the area in regimental strength.
- (2) Thorough analysis of the enemy disposition, accurate estimates of his reactions and detailed planning insured the success of the deception and the subsequent engagement. All combat elements were thoroughly knowledgeable of the concepts and details for each contingency, permitting the plan to be executed with a minimum of radio traffic.
- (3) Artillery and close air support were the principal killers. The fire support plan was carefully preplanned and integrated. The road provided an excellent fire support coordination line (FSCL). Artillery fires were preplanned for north of the road, close air support for south of the road.
- (4) The helicopter airlift mission commander participated throughout the planning of the operation and conducted air reconnaissance of the available landing zones. Because of his thorough knowledge of the concept and of the area of operations, he was able to control the lift of reaction forces in a very efficient and timely manner.

Conversely, there were factors that limited the degree of success achieved:

- (5) The most critical factor was the difficulty in predetermining the direction of the main VC attack. This limited the prior deployment of a larger portion of the reaction force along VC withdrawal routes.
- (6) The difficulty experienced in moving through the jungle prevented units from closing completely all potential VC escape routes. This difficulty was compounded by the lack of adequate landing zones to the rear of the VC force.

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- (7) VC camouflage and fire discipline were excellent. The preplanned artillery fires, reconnaissance by fire, and continuous aerial surveillance did not cause the VC to disclose their location prematurely.
- c. One command reported the use of a ruse which utilizes a "spotter" HU-1-B, employed singly, flying well ahead of a fire team. The spotter uses observers with starlight scopes to detect enemy movement. The observers engage the enemy with tracer ammunition to mark the target, and signal the fire team to attack. Additional forces are employed as required. This technique deceives the enemy into a false sense of security during darkness. Similar to the use of a helicopter fire team, is the use of Air Cushioned Vehicles (ACV). The technique is to search for a target by helicopter retaining the ACV's in a concealed location within striking distance. When contact is gained by the "observer" fire team, the ACV's are directed into the area to exploit the contact.
- The most elaborate C&D effort, during the reporting period, involved the preparation, early publication and wide distribution of an operation order for a notional3 combined operation by ARVN and US Divisions to cover another operation. The cover operation was planned for an area adjacent to the actual area of interest on Batangan Peninsula and included naval offshore support. All necessary liaison, planning, staging, reconnaissance and similar preparations for both operations were carried out concurrently with particularly tight security enforced in matters pertaining to the area of primary interest. The plan for the actual operation was closely held and received very limited distribution, thus all preparatory "indicators" detected by the enemy could logically be associated with the cover plan. The credibility of the cover plan was further established by a combined ground/naval demonstration in the notional area on the day before the actual operation. The extent of the enemy intelligence capability became apparent during post operation interrogation of POW's. The enemy was aware of the planned operation in the notional objective area at least one week before D-Day. He was also aware that there would be an operation in the actual objective area two days before D-Day. However, the cover operation was a success in that the enemy misjudged the type and intensity of the operation in the actual area of operations.
- e. The use of sonic devices should not be overlooked as an effective means of deceiving the enemy. The reported use of sonic deception has been very limited. One instance of note involved a night raid on a small island by riverine forces. Prerecorded landing craft and troop noises were broadcast through high powered PA systems from a boat off one end of the island. The purpose was to drive the enemy into an ambush site set up at another location.

Notional - Refers to False Objects or Plans that the Friendly Force Seeks to Make the Enemy Accept as Real.

Contact was not made and a follow up sweep of the island revealed that the enemy reported to have been on the island were not there. The plan itself appears to have been sound with a well thought out, practical application of sonic deception. The cause of the failure of the operation to make significant contact is unknown. The most likely causes are faulty intelligence or preoperation security leaks.

- f. Visual deception includes those active and passive measures taken to deny or confuse the enemy's observation techniques. Several examples of this technique have been given, e.g., attempts to confuse enemy road watches, the changing of established patterns, the delay of reconnaissance until the last moment, and the change in strike aircraft attack patterns, are means of visual deception. Visual deception has also been carried out during the extraction and insertion of long range reconnaissance patrols. In this case the deception objective is to prevent the local population or VC observer from accurately determining what is actually being accomplished.
 - (1) To mislead the enemy as to the actual locations of artillery weapons, use is made of dummy positions and of dummy weapons. To encourage the acceptance of the deception, personnel must lend credibility to the dummy positions by operating around them during the daylight hours and showing indication of normal activity in the vicinity of the positions. One example of the successful employment of dummy positions in the past, occurred during a ground attack on an ARV, 105mm howitzer artillery position. During the course of the attack the enemy used rockets to attack and destroy a dummy 105mm howitzer which had been constructed by the unit. The dummy howitzer was of simply wooden construction and had been maintained in the unit for several months prior to the attack. The use of dummy weapons positions is not limited to artillery weapons. Infantry weapons can be simulated in a defensive position to create the impression that the position is a much stronger one. Fake counter battery directional radar can also be constructed near key installations to discourage the enemy from attacking with indirect fire weapons.
 - (2) It is known that the VC are alert to L-19 "Bird-dog" air-craft. When an L-19 appears, the VC take cover. If the L-19 remains overhead the VC conclude that they have been spotted and immediately split up and depart the area because they anticipate an air strike or some other type of attack. If the L-19 leaves the area the VC generally resume their activities. A recommended technique is for the L-19 to leave the immediate area after spotting VC, and return when the attack is ready for execution. In this manner the VC may be lulled into a false sense of security and remain in the area.

SECTION III

ENEMY USE OF COVER AND DECEPTION

1. (C) GENERAL.

- a. There is no question that the enemy makes extensive use of cover and deception. He proves consistently that he is a master of cover by his elusiveness. His use of deception is much harder to substantiate, except in the case of imitative communications deception where cross checks are possible. It is difficult to be sure whether a captured document is in fact what it appears to be or is a plant. Many operations initiated on the basis of intelligence inputs have failed to make contact with the enemy. Did he evacuate the area because his intelligence forecast our operation? or was he there at all? In other instances the enemy has been there in ambush. Did he learn we were coming and set up the ambush? or did he bait the trap initially? No attempt is made here to answer these questions. The purpose is only to stimulate thought.
- b. Reports of the enemy's use of deceptive tactics have been few, other than in the communications area. Below are some examples of small scale deception. There is no reason to believe that large scale deception is not also practiced.
 - In late 1968, a PF platoon stacked their arms and participated in a game of volleyball in a province hamlet. A force of 9 - 10 VC wearing RF uniforms, infiltrated the hamlet in groups of two or three. This enabled the enemy to get between the PF personnel and their weapons before attacking the platoon. Three PF soldiers were killed, three were wounded and their weapons were captured. During the month of November alone there were numerous incidents reported of this nature. On 3 November elements of an ARVN Regt. established contact with an enemy squad wearing US fatigue jackets and ARVN trousers; 9 November a 3/4 ton truck from a mechanized unit received small arms fire from 12 - 15 VC dressed as ARVN soldiers; 21 November several enemy entered a hamlet wearing RF uniforms with ARVN unit patches and armed with M-1 rifles and hand grenades. All incidents resulted in friendly 1 sses. When using these uniforms the enemy has been observed to use recognition signs to distinguish themselves from FWMAF units. Recognition signs noted have included colored patches on a uniform collar, one sleeve rolled up or the use of a shoulder loop. Unknown personnel should not be accepted at face value simply because they are wearing friendly uniforms; positive identification must be required. RVN/FWMAF units must always be on the alert for VC/NVA use of friendly uniforms to conceal their true identity.

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(2) An aerial observer recently detected a decoy in the form of a dummy enemy soldier. The decoy was positioned on a route often reconnoitered by observation aircraft and was covered by two enemy positions located about 30 meters away. Fortunately, the observer detected the enemy positions, as well as the dummy and avoided the trap. The pilot/observer team must be especially vigilant for enemy ruses to lure aircraft into a vulnerable position.

2. (C) ENEMY USE OF COMMUNICATIONS DECEPTION.

- a. Counterinsurgency Lessons Learned No. 64, Imitative Communications Deception (ICD), was published by HQ, MACV on 15 September 1967. This publication cites VC/NVA communications deception practices and examples dating back to January 1964. The use of communications by the enemy as a lucrative source of intelligence is well documented. Reports of enemy intrusion and attempts at imitative deception on friendly circuits, as well as other intelligence sources, indicate that the enemy has substantial knowledge of friendly tactics, voice procedures and frequencies. The VC/NVA can and do intercept FWMAF communications. The enemy uses this intrusion and imitative communication deception to:
 - (1) Gain Intelligence.
 - (2) Harass.
 - (3) Divert artillery fire from enemy units.
 - (4) Call for artillery fire on friendly units.
 - (5) Jam communications.
 - (6) Divert aerial fire teams on to friendly units.
 - (7) Vector aerial fire teams on to friendly units.
 - (8) Gain access to friendly positions.
 - (9) Draw friendly units into ambushes.
- b. Friendly units must be constantly alert to the possibility of enemy intercept and must continually practice good communications security. As soon as ICD is suspected, the friendly station must request authentication. This will normally cause the unknown station to leave the net. Should the unknown station continue to transmit for the purpose of jamming, operators should attempt to work through this traffic by tuning their sets if possible.

During this procedure, no reference should be made to what effect th jamming is having on friendly communications. As a last resort, operators should change to alternate frequencies. Any weakness or breakdown in communications security practices or failure to utilize proper authentication procedures makes friendly communications vulnerable to enemy deception efforts. It also provides the enemy with an excellent intelligence source. All detected attempts by the enemy to gain intelligence or deceive must be reported in detail so that proper countermeasures may be taken. Following are reported examples of enemy intrusion:

- (1) One sector received a radio transmission from an element identifying itself as "RED RANGER". "RED RANGER" said that his unit was approximately 11 KM north of sector headquarters and had made contact with a VC battalion. He further stated that he had visual observation of an enemy rocket site in the area. His reported casualties were 1 WIA and 2 KIA. There was no identifiable friendly unit with the code name of "RED RANGER". It is believed that the enemy was employing deception techniques. The transmission was also monitored by a friendly artillery unit. Indications are that the unknown station was south and not north of sector headquarters. A similar situation occurred recently near a CIDG camp when an unknown station used the call sign of "RED RANGER". It appears that this unknown station was somewhat successful in the fact that it tied up a considerable amount of time with its transmission.
- (2) A form of communications jamming was experienced by an assault helicopter company on their FM nets. The form of jamming involved the recording of allied radio telephone transmissions over a period of time. Intrusion into friendly nets was accomplished by the enemy playing back the recording of one or both parties of a previous conversation. This allowed the use of terminology, radio telephone procedures, and various English phrases and accents recognizable to US communicators. Using such techniques, it was not difficult for the VC/NVA to disrupt friendly communications until the voice was discovered. Numerous transmissions from unknown stations were received by units located in the sector area. When the unknown stations were asked to identify themselves they utilized outdated phonetics (e.g., Able, Baker, etc). It was also noted that the transmitters utilized were either defective or located out of country. The unknown stations tried to obtain the names and locations of the units that were receiving them.

- (3) Four stations identifying as an Australian airborne unit entered the net, caused confusion, diverted artillery fire and delayed U.S. movement. All voices were in English with an Australian accent. A check revealed there were no Australian units in the area.
- (4) A bogus station using call sign HURRICANE 6 requested to know what fire support was available in the area.
- (5) A station identifying itself using an AFTER BURNER call sign requested a fire mission on a friendly location. This was thwarted when the Net Control Station (NCS) checked the coordinates.
- (6) During one month there were 4 instances of jamming and 3 incidents of ICD reported. In one instance a station using the call sign SIDEWINDER 687 (a division FAC call sign) entered a net and caused a light fire team to be diverted by stating that friendly troops were in the area. A later check proved this false. The bogus station talked to all the commanders in the net and warned of enemy attempts to thwart the operation.
- (7) A brigade NCS received a call from a station using a proper call sign requesting the frequency of an adjacent unit. When asked why he needed the frequency, he stated he had lost land line communications with the adjacent unit and had a message for them. When requested to authenticate the station could not and left the air.
- (8) A station using the call sign SUNFLOWER 11 called the province military police operations desk and informed them that he and SUNFLOWER 14 had been involved in a traffic accident on a main street in the province capital. The station stated that four personnel had been seriously injured and requested assistance. The desk sergeant checked with the battalion TOC and obtained a situation report which confirmed that there were no patrols in that area with those specific call signs. When the station was asked to authenticate, no further transmission was received. Thirty minutes later a station using the call sign SUNFLOWER 11 entered the net and requested information concerning injuries and damage following the explosion of 3 lbs. of chicom plastic explosives on the same main street. In another instance at the same MP operations desk, a station requested information concerning a convoy escort. He was directed to contact the base by Lima Lima (Land Line). After approximately two minutes of radio silence, he attempted to enter the net with the following transmission "Lima, Lima, this is SHORT-TIMER Control, Over!"

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- (9) Friendly elements in a helicopter spotted a group of VC near the southern boundary of the province. While observers were adjusting fire on the enemy's position, an unknown radio station broadcast the following on the friendly frequency, "SWAMP FOX", THIS IS HAWKING PISTOL 15. WE ARE FRIENDLY AND ARE RETURNING TO BTT. DO NOT FIRE." The helicopter engaged the unknown station in conversation and used radio direction finding equipment to pinpoint the transmitter location. A friendly reaction force was inserted into the area and made contact with an enemy force.
- (10) There were several reports of male Caucasians working with the VC in interfering with communications, attempting to disrupt operations and trying to penetrate defensive perimeters.
- (11) Another example of enemy intrusion was a bogus station broadcasting on the alternate frequency immediately after an ICD by him on the primary frequency. This would suggest a compromise of the unit's Communication Electronic Operating Instructions (CEOI).
- (12) In yet another instance, an unknown station reported that an aircraft was down, gave the coordinates, reported two WIA and surrounded by VC. This was an attempt to lure U.S. aircraft/forces into the hostile area.
- (13) And, finally, as an example of the enemy capability to react once he has intercepted our communications: The interrogation of the former commander of the Dong Nai Regiment (VC) revealed an instance of the battalion intercept unit furnishing information that three American companies were scheduled to land in his area at 1400 hours the same day. This was coupled with the expectation that the Americans would use an adjacent marsh as a landing zone and an ambush was prepared. At 1500 hours contact was made between the VC and the Americans. Later reconnaissance revealed that 100 American KIA resulted from the ambush at a cost of 25 KIA to the VC. The same source revealed that the VC intercept unit working with the Dong Nai Regiment was capable of processing and collating intercepted communications within 6 hours. U.S. units in the area made extensive use of locally produced, unauthorized brevity codes, shackle codes, and point of origin codes to encrypt locations. The enemy had no difficulty in breaking these "home made" codes.

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5 - COMDT, USAAMS
2 - COMDT, USACMLCS
2 - COMDT, USACS
5 - COMDT, USACSC
5 - COMDT, USACSC
5 - COMDT USARPAC Intel Sch
2 - Supt. USNA
   5 - COMDT USARPAC Intel Sch
2 - Supt, USNA
2 - Supt, USNPGS
3 - Supt, USMA
2 - Supt, USAFA
5 - USA Sch of Americas
2 - CO, NAVPHIBSCOL CORO
2 - CO, USA Cbt Surv Sch
1 - CO, USNOTS
1 - HQ Foreign Tech Dir, AFSC
2 - HQ APGC (PGFS)
5 - PACAF (IGSL)
4 - USAF (AFISP-S)
5 - Dept of Air Police Tng
     5 - Dept of Air Police Tng
     1 - Dir, Special Air Warfare
                Sch
     1 - DIA (DIAAP-10A2)
1 - ATC (ATOPT-S)
     1 - 3636 CCTG (CCT-OT)
     1 - General Research Corp
     1 - Det 2, 39th Air Div
2 - 39th Air Div
   10 - DA, ACOFS, FD
      1 - ASD (ASBEE-10)
      1 - CINCPACREP PHIL
      1 - USN Mine Def Lab
      5 - CGUSARHAW
      1 - JCB Library, USMC
2 - FTD (TDBAS-2)
   1 - USACDC, MP Agency
10 - XVIII Abn Corps, Arty
      2 - USA FTC (Ft Rucker)
      2 - USAAC (Ft Rucker)
5 - USAIC (Ft Benning)
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- 5 USA S/TC (Ft Gordon)
 5 USATC (Ft Jackson)
 5 USA S/TC (Ft McClellan)
 5 USATC (Ft Benning)
 5 USATC (Ft Bragg)
 5 USATC (Ft Campbell)
 5 USATC (Ft Cord)
 5 USATC (Ft Ord)
 5 USATC (Ft Polk)
 5 USATC (Ft Dix)
 5 USATC (Ft Bliss)
 10 Vietnam Tng Center

- 10 Vietnam Tng Center
- 3 Chairman, JTCG/ME
- 2 82d CSP Wg
- 2 828 CSP wg
 5 Dept of Hist, USAFA
 2 Hq Aero Sys Div (AFSC)
 5 CG, USCONARC
 5 CG, 24th Inf Div
 4 479th Tac Ftr Wg

- 1 USARMA, Laos

- 5 CG, USARYIS
 2 CG, USARSUPTHAI
 5 CG, USARSUPTHAI
 2 CG, Tripler Army Hosp
- 1 5th SFG
- 1 4th PSYOP Gp
- 3 MAAG ROC
- 6 USMILADREP SEATO

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